

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, EFIN, CZ, US
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER

REF: STATE 9361

1. SUMMARY. I MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CHNOUPEK JANUARY 15 FOR ALMOST TWO HOURS. THE ATMOSPHERE WAS CORRECT BUT LACKED THE WARMTH OF OUR MEETINGS DURING 1974; THERE WERE NO HARSH RECRIMINATIONS. CHNOUPKE EMPHASIZED THE DISSATISFACTION THAT EXISTED THROUGHOUT CZECHOSLOVAKIA AFTER PASSAGE OF LONG/GRAVEL AMENDMENT, BUT HE SAID THE CZECHOSLOVAKS "DID NOT WANT TO CLOSE THE DOOR TO FURTHER NORMALIZATION," AND HE SPECIFICALLY SAID HE DID NOT EXCLUDE FURTHER TALKS. THE FOREIGN MINISTER ASKED, AS EXPECTED, WHAT WE MEANT BY "RENEGOTIATION," HE DID NOT GIVE A FLAT NO ON ANY ELEMENT OF US-CZECHOSLOVAK RELATIONS, BUT HE DID SAY THAT WITH TRADE PROSPECTS ON ICE, WE COULD NOT EXPECT TO MOVE FORWARD ON OTHER NORMALIZATION MEASURES -- SUCH AS OPENING OF CONSULATE GENERAL IN BRATISLAVA -- UNTIL THEY HEARD SOME SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FROM US SIDE. THERE WAS SOME DISCUSSION OF SOVIET DECISION RE USSR TRADE AGREEMENT, AND CHNOUPEK SAID THAT ANY US-CZECHOSLOVAK AGREEMENTS REACHED MUST NOT INCLUDE ANY DISCRIMINATORY PROVISIONS OR ANY INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS. FOR MY

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PART, I MADE THE POINTS IN REFTEL, AND ARGUED STRONGLY THAT

WE SHOULD DO NOTHING TO DISTURB THE ATMOSPHERE WHILE WE LOOKED FOR WAYS TO RECOMMENCE FORWARD MOVEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. IN HIS OPENING STATEMENT CHNOUPEK EMPHASIZED THE DISAPPOINTMENT FELT BY THE CZECHOSLOVAKS AT THE LONG-GRAVEL RESTRICTIONS IN THE TRADE BILL DESPITE HIS EFFORTS TO DO EVERYTHING ASKED FOR BY THE US SIDE. HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN A "VERY BAD REACTION" THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. NEVERTHELESS THE CZECH POSITION WAS MODERATE, AS INDICATED BY THE AUTHORITATIVE RUDE PRAVO ARTICLE (PRAGUE 0006) -- AND LATER IN THE CONVERSATION HE ADDED THAT HE HAD OPPOSED CERTAIN FORMULATIONS IN THE ARTICLE, BUT THEY HAD GOT IN BECAUSE OF THE COMPLEXITY OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION. (HE REFERRED MORE THAN ONCE TO HIS PERSONAL DIFFICULTIES OVER THE LONG-GRAVEL MATTER, INCLUDING THE STATEMENT THAT "MUCH PERSONAL COURAGE" WOULD BE NEEDED TO PRESENT NEW PROPOSALS FOR APPROVAL.) HE ASKED WHAT THE WORD "RENEGOTIATION" MEANT, AND SAID IN FACT THE CONCESSION OFFERED BY THE CZECH SIDE ON SHORTENING PAYMENT TIME CONSTITUTED A KIND OF RENEGOTIATION WITHOUT LABELING IT THAT. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THEY WERE WAITING FOR SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FROM US.

3. IN REPLY, I MADE THE POINTS IN REFTEL, AND STRESSED THE NEED NOT TO FREEZE RELATIONS BUT TO MOVE AHEAD. I SAID IT WAS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT WE SHOULD THINK OF THE PRESENT STAGE IN US-CZECHOSLOVAK RELATIONS AS A CHALLENGE TO FIND NEW BEGINNINGS, RATHER THAN TAKING OUR MUTUAL DISAPPOINTMENT AS THE END OF A STAGE IN OUR RELATIONS. QUOTING THE SECRETARY'S COMMENTS ON THE SOVIET ACTION RE US-USSR TRADE AGREEMENT, I SAID I SAW SOME HOPE FOR US-CZECH RELATIONS AS WELL AS US-SOVIET RELATIONS IN DR. KISSINGER'S STATEMENT THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD "CONTINUE TO PURSUE ALL AVAILABLE AVENUES FOR SUCH AN IMPROVEMENT, INCLUDING EFFORTS TO OBTAIN LEGISLATION THAT WILL PERMIT NORMAL TRADING RELATIONSHIPS." I THEN EMPHASIZED THE NEED TO AVOID NEGATIVE ACTS AND TO STRIVE FOR AN ATMOSPHERE CONDUCIVE TO GOOD PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CONGRESS IN THE AREA OF CZECHOSLOVAK RELATIONS.

4. WHEN I ASKED IF THE CZECH SIDE HAD ANY COMMENTS ON ANY SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS MADE SO FAR IN CONVERSATIONS IN WASHINGTON, CHNOUPEK EMPHASIZED THAT THEY HAD ONLY SOME PERSONAL, CONFIDENTIAL

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EXPRESSIONS OF OPINION, BUT THEY WERE WAITING FOR FORMAL PROPOSALS FROM US SIDE. MENTIONING THE LEGAL DIVISION STUDY OF THE TRADE ACT, I SAID UNDOUBTEDLY THIS WOULD TAKE SOME TIME. TURNING AGAIN TO "RENEGOTIATION," CHNOUPEK SAID IN FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS THEY WOULD HAVE TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE RECORD OF AGREEMENTS FALLING THROUGH BECAUSE OF CONGRESSIONAL OPPOSITION: NEXT TIME HE WOULD HAVE TO BE SURE OF HIMSELF BEFORE PUTTING ANY NEW AGREEMENTS BEFORE HIS AUTHORITY

TIES. HE THEN REPEATED FAMILIAR THEMES OF THE POLITICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE GOLD TO HIS COUNTRY, AND CZECHOSLOVAK ABILITY TO SURVIVE WITHOUT THE GOLD UNTIL THEY GOT IT BACK ON FAIR TERM. HE WENT ON TO SAY BOTH CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND THE US COULD LIVE WITHOUT DETENTE SEVERAL MORE DECADES IF NECESSARY, BUT QUESTION WAS, WOULD THIS BE GOOD, AND ANSWER WAS NO.

5. TURNING TO CURRENT BILATERAL MATTERS, CHNOUPEK SAID OTHER STEPS IN PROGRESS-- HE SPECIFIED OPENING OF CONSULATE GENERAL IN BRATISLAVA AND SCIENTIFIC-CULTURAL AGREEMENT -- COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO GO FORWARD WITH TRADE AREA FROZEN. WITH A MAIN AIM OF CONSULATES TO EXPAND TRADE, CHNOUPEK SAID IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCE HE DID NOT SEE HOW HE COULD BE EXPECTED TO SPEAK OUT IN FAVOR OF OPENING CONSULATE GENERAL. I TALKED TO THIS POINT AT SOME LENGTH, STRESSING THAT IT MIGHT HARM THE ATMOSPHERE, AND THUS OUR CHANCES OF A FRESH START, IF OPENING WERE POSTPONED. HE DID NOT GIVE A FLAT NO, BUT SAID THEY WOULD HAVE TO SEE WHAT PROPOSALS THEY HAD FROM US SIDE RE CLAIMS AGREEMENT. CHNOUPEK SUMMED UP THIS PART BY SAYING HE DID NOT EXCLUDE THAT ALL PLANNED STEPS MIGHT TAKE PLACE; INDEED HE THOUGHT THEY SHOULD TAKE PLACE: BUT BEING REALISTIC, THEY HAD TO BE SURE THE WHOLE COMPLEX HAD A CHANCE TO SUCCEED. THE BALL WAS IN THE US COURT, HE SAID, AND HE DID NOT SEE HOW WE COULD EXPECT HIM TO SAY ANYTHING ELSE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. MEMCON FOLLOWS.

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